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PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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MORAL HONESTY AND MORAL EARNESTNESS.

"If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple."—LUKE xiv., 26, 27.

[Pretty steep step-stones those are, to the gate of a new kingdom.]

"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me."—JOHN xiv., 6.

Whatever may be the fate of the question as to the divinity of Christ, textually, and upon the lower grounds of philosophy, it seems impossible to me to accept Jesus as a mere man without throwing out the most striking elements of his character. All those things which lift themselves above the ordinary horizon of an instructor, and leave us almost gasping by their boldness, must be left out, if we so regard him. Christ must have been either insane or divine. If he was a man, for him to have made such claims for himself as he did, indicated insanity. On the supposition that he was divine, these claims are rational, and indicate a Being transcending the measure of a man. He was our Exemplar of the Father. He was the manifestation of God to men. He epitomized in himself the universal. The obscure in his teaching is that in which he glides from the local and temporary to higher things, that in their nature are universal, and are therefore difficult of comprehension by us. "I am the way"—I am a practical development. "I am the truth"—I represent the reality. "I am the life"—not an abstraction, not a system, do I bring. I bring the life itself. I represent to the world, by a practical life, the great elements which concern the world to come. He stands for system, for practice and for being, all at once; and that is as it should be, if he be divine.

It is not, however, the divinity of Christ that I am to preach about to day. This is simply on the way to explain the conditions of discipleship. When, therefore, he says to men that no one can come to him who does not hate father and mother and brother and

SUNDAY MORNING, Oct. 29, 1872. LESSON: MATT. v., 2-12; 1 COR. xii, 31; xiii. HYMNS (Plymouth Collection): Nos. 217, 513, 770.

sister, if it be meant that love to God requires the sacrifice of all other loves, it is monstrous, and divinity is demoniac. It must mean something else than that. This is the hardest condition that is thrown into the whole flow of the Saviour's teaching. But if it mean that in attempting to follow Jesus, as the representation of supreme good, supreme wisdom, and supreme moral truth, we are so to love that which is right and just and true and beneficent and good that we shall sacrifice everything rather than give up this supreme excellence, then God be thanked that there has been such a sentiment uttered and embodied. That is right; and there is no one who has a touch of manhood in him who does not feel that when once a man has his eyes open to see the noblest and best things, he ought to give up everything on earth rather than yield his convictions in regard to them, or his fidelity to those convictions. It is an appeal to universal heroism. All truths end in God. They began there. They come back there. All pure and disinterested lovers of truth, therefore, though they may not know it, are working their way back toward God. And if Christ be the manifestation of God upon earth, they are working toward him.

The following of the stars by the magi is again seen where men sweep the heavens for truth; and though they may not discover the nature of divinity, if they reveal any facts which God has implanted in the universe, they are working toward him. The whole world is awaking. Men are reaching out in every direction for truth. New fields and new methods are being discovered. The stars in the heavens above, and the strata in the earth beneath are becoming witnesses, and are being brought one after another to the stand to testify who made them, and, as far as may be, why he made them.

It is in this view that we read the second passage of our text, which is an inculcation of moral honesty and moral earnestness; and this is the subject which I am going to speak of this morning.

It is declared that no man can come to God who does not hate his father and mother, his brother and sister, his wife, and himself. That is to say, there is no one thing that a man shall hold so dear to himself, if it ever comes to that, as to erect it into equality with the allegiance which he owes to his convictions of that which is pure and just and right and true, or into superiority over it. One's manhood lies higher up than mere social relations. It is not to be sacrificed for anything. Every one's manhood lies in the bosom of his God, and in all the faiths and convictions which spring from him.

This passage, therefore, must not be construed in a narrow and

sectarian spirit. It gives no one a right to assert that his definition of Christ is the only true definition. No man has a true definition of Christ. Christ is a representative of universal truth, of universal life in activity, and of universal practicalness. And that is the Christ that every heart must aspire to. There is a noonday Christ, there is a twilight Christ, and there is a midnight Christ. Where men discern him, and believe him to be personal, God over all, blessed and blessing forever, I call him the noonday Christ. He is unspeakably dear. He is full of instruction, and full of comfort, ministering, through human thought, to human faith, endless bounty. And there is a twilight Christ where men, not seeing a person, nor understanding the full meaning of Scripture teaching, yet believe in truth, and honor, and purity, and all beneficence, and are working toward quality, not knowing that qualities themselves are but the signs of personality. They are working toward Christ; but it is a twilight Christ whom they do not discern themselves. Then there are a great many mute and undiscerning natures who have heart-swells and aspirations, and blind yearnings, and soul-sicknesses. It is God suffering pain with them that affects them. They long, they know not for what. There is a midnight Christ—a Christ wrapped in darkness—that they know nothing of. It is the necessity of giving one's whole being to right-thinking, right acting, and right feeling, that they are experiencing. All truths of a higher mind need to have soul-force applied to them. Truth, as we speak of it, is an abstraction. Truths that are to have any power are to become incarnated in us, and are to get their power by that which we put behind them or add to them. There is a truth of patriotism; but it is of no validity whatever till it makes a patriot. It is the human element which he gives to patriotism that makes it powerful. The abstract doctrine of love would be well enough if men were nothing but spectators; but love, to have any power, must have fathers and mothers on earth. There must be homes, there must be brothers and sisters, and the truth itself must become a living quality, or it is good for nothing—in the conditions in which we live, at any rate. He that accepts truth, and feels its excellence, must give to it his own personal force. And that is what we mean by *believing*, in distinction from *perceiving*. It is such an acceptance of truth that it kindles in us, or we kindle around it, the understanding, the imagination, and the emotions also. This demands loyalty to conviction, moral honesty and moral earnestness. No man believes anything *until he has his being aroused* according to the proper measure of the truth that is presented to him, and adds the force of his being to that which

he believes. This giving of yourself to the truth that you hold, is what I mean by *moral earnestness and moral honesty.*

This is the root of much of Christ's teaching. His age had in it the Greek element. The Greeks had carried their philosophy and speculations over the whole region round about Palestine, and through it; and they liked to have swept away the whole Jewish system by their philosophy. There was also in his day the pure Jewish element, developed chiefly in the direction of patriotism, but also in the general direction of moral intensity, whether it was applied to country or to faith. There was likewise a Pharisaic element. A Pharisee was one who reduced everything to machinery, as it were, and worshiped that. He was the ritualist of antiquity. He had spots in him that were good, but professionally and distinctively he was the mere worshiper of an external ritual. Next were the Sadducees, or materialists. Their system was a cross between the Greek philosophy and the Pharasaic machinism.

Now, all these things were in conflict in the community, and our Master saw how many there were who believed a little in one thing, a little in another, and a little in another. He saw that there was no strong conviction; that there was no faith which took men up, as it were, by the roots. There was nothing in his time which made men willing to live and suffer and die for their convictions. Men were effeminate. They were selfish. They were niggling. They were jealous. They were mean. They ran round in little narrow circles of sectarianism. They did not feel the great pulse of universal truth. Nor did they feel the ardor and enthusiasm of divinity in truth. There was nothing in the truth as they held it that magnified them. They were minified all the time. Their idea of truth was whittling them sharp and narrow and fragile, and not building them up broad and high.

Therefore it was, that all the way through his life Christ demanded *believing:* not a catechetical acceptance of this or that schedule, but a heart that believed, and acted as it believed. Earnestness; sympathy with things true, everywhere, and not with things dry and philosophical merely; heartfelt enthusiasm; real manhood—full-fountained, large-streamed, outplaying manhood—this was what Christ was aiming after. All through his life he was seeking to make people dependent on that, asking, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" There were all kinds of men, swearing by all manner of things: there were some men that swore by the temple, and some that swore by Samaria, and some that swore by Athens, and some that swore by Rome; but there were none that swore reverently by the God of the uni-

verse, and the race, and the grandeur thereof. Faith in these was almost unknown.

Christ was all the time teaching these universal truths—central love, and, as issuing from it, conscience, equity, and fidelity. God, the representative of the Father; Christ Jesus, the manifestation of God; love, the grand vital point of the universe; all beliefs infused with love and vitalized by enthusiasm; and manhood, following faith and belief,—such were the elements of the teaching of Christ, as I read his life in the Gospels. He was himself a *man* in the nobler sense of that term, and he meant that his disciples should be men. Manhood was what he sought, and it was this that he wrought out. He taught his disciples to believe with earnestness, and to drive home their beliefs upon others. He taught them to suffer if need be, though never to court suffering, and to use all ordinary prudence to avoid suffering; but still, rather than give up their belief, to suffer. He taught them, rather than yield their manhood, to take not only suffering, but death itself. To be true to one's own self may be pernicious, or it may be noble. If by yourself you mean your little devilish self, to be true to that is mean enough; but if you have a self that you got from God, and that is higher than the earth, and is always augmenting, and leading to prayer, and to a more faithful performance of duty, it is divine and noble to be true to that. And men were commanded to accept it in love, and to believe in it all through, from core to skin, and from center to circumference again. They were told to put their life into it. And they were to do it all under the illumination and genial warmth of that love which holds all men to be brethren.

"In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure would give them repentance."

They were to round out a life dedicated to the race, and dedicated to the everlasting and the infinite. Such a life was declared to be better than a full-fed life in the torpid present.

The intensity of belief which was inculcated by the Saviour has continued down to our day. Since the Gospels were made known, and the disciples were gathered into churches, there has been in the world an intensity of believing which was not known before; but it has been a weak, uneducated intensity, which has largely left out the prime element of Christianity,—namely, love. It has lacked comprehensiveness and balance of the sweet affections. Yet it has been the leaven of all true modern science and modern philosophy. In the church it degenerated into bigotry, and from that into persecution, which is nothing but a logical outgrowth of bigotry.

But these things are passing away. The times in which we live are coming into an intensity of belief which is qualified and sweetened by the love element. As taught by Jesus, moral earnestness was not despotic; but since his time moral earnestness has been used with conviction as a power by which to dash other people in pieces. It is being used even now as a rule by which to judge other people.

Now, every man is to hold his own convictions with intensity; but if he is to hold them with intensity, how shall he use them so as not to make them the measure by which to judge men, or a power by which to put them in bonds? The solution of it is in this: "Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant." That is the key of the idea of supremacy, which consists in conferring blessings. I am to inforce my convictions; and I am to do it, not by making myself stronger than other men, nor by putting myself where I can take advantage of them, but by such pre-eminent humility, and by such self-sacrificing service, that I become more useful to them. I am to put myself under them, and lift them up on to my ground.

Convictions have very largely ministered to spiritual pride and arrogance. Men have said: "I am the interpreter of God's truth: come up and believe that truth." And when Dissent has said, "I will not," it has been smitten and blasted.

When March comes, and the all-seeing sun, that has delayed all winter, comes back to the fields, and beholds nothing, and goes down and comes up, and goes down and comes up, and reaps nothing, and all the temperate zone lies frigid, and not a field has garniture or harvest, what says the sun? Does it smite the earth with its long lines of heat or light, saying, "Cursed be the earth"? No, verily, the sun says, "I will dig under;" and so from day to day the sun goes down into the ground till it gets lower than the roots run; and there, hiding itself, it whispers and coaxes and persuades. And by and by that under-nutriment invites; and up comes the grass, and out come the flowers; and once brought out by the power of the sun, they look up, and perhaps think they made the sun, because they now first see him on opening their eyes!

The spirit of the divine is humility, self-abasement, hiding, going under. It is the germinating power by which things are stimulated to develop according to their nature, and the life that is in them.

We are to die for our convictions, if need be; but we are never to make others die for them. It is not for me, that hold a philo-

sophy, and that believe in that philosophy as the life of the world, to beat down with my convictions other men; but I am so to transform my life that it shall tend to knit their sorrow and want with aspiration, and, acting in a thousand invisible ways, permeate them, develop them, stimulate their growth, and bring them up by the power of growing.

True authority over men is neither logical nor philosophic: it is emotive. My heart owns you. You are the slaves of my heart. Blessed is the slave of love. The babe is the slave of the mother. The child is the slave of the father. And when Love is the master, who does not want to be a slave? God so loved the world that he gave his Son for it; and we, following in his tracks, and accepting the truth with an intense moral conviction of its benefit, abounding with peace everywhere, shooting out bounty wherever we go, are, in the enthusiasm of the truth, to give ourselves to it, and die for it, if need be; never using it as an oppressor's rod, for others, but using it to teach them, and, by the power in the soul of gentleness, and goodness, and sweetness, and self-sacrificing love, to enable them to rise higher, grow broader, develop more.

Men say, "If we have the truth, ought we not to make men accept it?" Yes; but you ought not to make them accept it by every method—certainly not by the coarse and hard method of despotism. The grand element of divine truth, as revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ, when it is stated at large, is most beautiful and eye-filling. Men who resist and resent the doctrine of the atonement, when it is stated in the orthodox form, open their hearts at once to that from which all the explanations of that doctrine are derived. The grand element of motherhood, and the grand element of God-hood, is that of one suffering for another. The quality of loving to suffer for the benefit of others—that is the fundamental element of the best side of human life, and the best revelation of the divine nature. "I came not to destroy men's lives," says the Master, "but to save them."

This intense moral conviction, that is urged by our Lord when he says we must hate father, and mother, and brother, and sister, rather than be false to our convictions—or that we must be true to our convictions rather than give up Christ as the epitome of truth, and goodness, and bounty—is not intolerant, and can not be intolerant.

"Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and we forbade him because he followed not with us."

What saith the Master?

"He that is not against us is for us."

Men may not be on your side, but they may be going toward the same city where you are going, by a parallel route, or even by a circuitous route. Whenever a man has his face set as though he would go to Jerusalem, you have no right to question the method by which he shall go.

When from Upper Galilee men went to their three, and afterwards four great annual feasts at Jerusalem, some could go down along the plain by Joppa, some could go along the plain of Esdraelon and through Samaria, some could go along on the west side of the Jordan, and others could go through Perea and by Jericho. And it was not for a Jew who went along the Mediterranean to throw stones at the men who went to Jerusalem by the Sea of Galilee. Neither was it for those who took the middle path to criticise those who took the circuitous routes. They all went the right way so that they appeared in Zion and before God.

Now we are not to tolerate men on the ground of indifference to moral truth. It does not make the slightest difference in the world to men whether flax is rotted in the dew by exposure through nights and days in the field, or whether it is put into a vat and rotted by some chemical process; and shall they say that they are tolerant of the one or the other method? They do not bother themselves about these matters, nor think of them, nor care for them. There are a great many men who revile systems of religion, and say that churches are of no use; and yet they pride themselves on their toleration toward them. They tolerate churches because they would just as lief go to one as to another. It is a matter of indifference to them whether they go to a Roman Catholic church, or a Protestant church, or a church of any of twenty different sects. And I dare say they would just as lief stay at home as go to either of them. They do not care for either. And yet they call their attitude in regard to them toleration. I call it stupidity. I never tolerate anything that I am totally indifferent about. Toleration implies sensibility, choice, belief, and earnestness therein. Toleration is not a permission by which we, being grounded in the truth, and being made royal by it, are placed in authority over our fellow men. It is not a kind of charter which we give to them, saying: "We have the true way; but still, we permit you, on account of your weakness, to walk in it." Men's liberties are not in our hands. Men are not subject to us. I own no man except in proportion as I love him; and you own nobody that you do not love. No one has an ownership in the human race except God. "One is your Master, even Christ: and all ye are brethren." You have no permissions to give. You may ape tyranny in its gracious

moods; but men think by the same right that you do. Even if they think wrong, they think by the same right that you do. It is not therefore for you to interfere with their liberty in this regard. And toleration does not consist in a gracious courtesy. It is not for you to say: "Oh, we are the church; we are the orthodox people; we have the keys; we have the root; we have all that belongs to the truth; and yet, we are courteous, and will permit you outsiders to partake of the royal bounty which God has given to us." No, no; I accept no such charity at anybody's hands. I accept no charity for my head or for my heart. I am as much crowned as the bishop, or the priest, or the minister. There is no sect that can crown me. There is no body of men that can give me any permission. You might as well come to me and say, "I make you a present of day-light," as to offer to give me freedom of thought in matters of religion; and if a man should offer me the twilight I should say to him, "Thank you, sir: God made it when he made the sun. It is my sun, and not yours alone; and it is my twilight." You may own houses, and lands, and ships, and what not; but you cannot own me, or my freedom to think. God made me to think, and to be free in my thinking, with responsibility only to him, except so far as the organization of society requires some responsibility to it.

I derive my right in this matter, not as a courtesy, not as a charter of permission, not as if you had any right to interfere with it. I defy you, and stand in my own individuality, and say: "I am responsible to God: I admit that; but I am not responsible to you, nor to any crown, nor to any sectarian body."

What is toleration? It is an equity. It is a respect for other men's rights. It is a looking upon other people's consciences without judging them. It is a sympathy with men who are true to their consciences, which leads you to rejoice in them even if their consciences are not just what yours is. It is something grander than anything which belongs to ordinary experiences.

More than that, toleration is confidence in truth as such. It is such a sense of the reality of truth, and of its certitude, and of its accessibleness, that it believes that, though not to-day nor to-morrow, yet, in due time, the truth will most certainly be brought out. And if you believe that you have the truth, then you are the one, above every other, who can afford to let every other one think freely. If you are holding a conventional truth, of which you are not exactly certain, you will not be apt to desire that it shall be looked at too closely, or that it shall be probed too deeply, lest the foundations on which you stand may be taken away; but if you

believe in the truth, and it makes a part of your being, then you will be as certain as that God's throne will not be shaken, that the truth will not be damaged by any human looking at it. Let men think; and if their thinkings do not amount to any thing more, they will be, like the last year's leaves, manure for this year's growths. Let men think; and whether their thinkings are skillful or not, or wise or not, or strong or not, it is better that they should not be repressed. There is nothing that the world needs to guard so much as liberty in thinking, and freedom in expression. For, the moment you begin to shut the doors and windows, the stoves give forth their heat, and fevers spring from the unventilated rooms. While men thirst after truths; while their souls long to go into fellowship with the divine soul; while their hearts are touched with the spirit of the universal, and they feel something of the throbs of the infinite in themselves; while they feel that they are the sons of God; while God seeks them, and everything in them nobly responds to the call of God, and strives so find its way up to him in simplicity and with fidelity of conviction, you cannot afford to smother and confine them. They must have liberty, and largeness, and room.

But are there not mistakes made by the exercise of liberty in thinking? and is there not often harm produced by these mistakes? Momentarily there may be.

When I go into the field to cut wheat, and gather in my hands the clusters, and bring round the sickle, every stalk has reason to complain, and say, "Have I not done my duty? Have I not grown all summer long, and perfected my juices, and given my whole life to the work? See how I am turning yellow and ripening the wheat! Wherefore am I to be cut down?" "Because I want this seed to sow, that I may raise other harvests. That is why I cut you down. It is the damage which you sustain that is to be the life of the next harvest."

And so it is with men who believe. They ripen their mistakes, if they make mistakes; and these are to be sown again. The mistakes of men in one generation have constituted the seed-wheat of truths for the next generation. The heresies of one age are the orthodoxies of the next age. The infidelities of one period are the fidelities of another period. So the world has gone on opening and thinking, in chains, in bonds, and in gyves. Under all manner of hindrances men have thought; and much good has been wrought out by their thinking. But nothing ever had so hard a time in this world as the spiritual in man striving to get out of the reach of the material. It seems as though every man were born with a lion un-

der him, and an angel on him—and the angel has had a hard time!

Moral earnestness, as Christ taught it, then, is clear-thoughtedness in the whole realm of truth, as far as you can enter in. It is giving to it your confidence, your obedience, your personal conformity. It is impressing it upon others, by word or example, as something sweet and noble, and as something indispensable to their happiness. It is identifying yourself with truth as God's message, you being his messenger. It is having such a sense of its beauty as a gift of God, and of its worth as God's bounty, that you identify yourself with it and rise or fall as it rises or falls. So it is a pain and thorn, and yet a crown and joy.

The roots of all true belief, then, may be regarded in the sense in which I have now defined them. I believe that all divine being centers in love; and that all force, all justice, all pain-producing elements, all that is rigorous and exacting, is but the outworking of the central spirit of love in God. If I did not believe this, I would be an infidel; I would be an atheist; I would cover my head, and blind my eyes, and call for death, and die. And I would die thankfully, yea even die forever, if God be demoniac; but if God be goodness, no matter what instrument he pleases to take for working out goodness, I will wait, and suffer, and take on pain, that by and by, though it be a thousand ages hence, I may stand in the center of love, and see the enigmas of time, and all its strange scenes, in panorama or drama, of sorrow or joy, opened up, and brought into an endless summer. But it is not in me to believe in vindictiveness on the part of God. The nearer I come to Christ the less I believe in suffering administered for the sake of suffering. I should have to go further and further from God to believe that pain for the sake of pain, or sorrow for the sake of sorrow, can be divine. Instrumental suffering—I hail it. Suffering for suffering's sake—I detest it; and I bring to the detestation every spark of indignation that has been kindled in my conscience by the cross, and by Him that hung thereon.

In view of the subject thus far opened—the nature of moral earnestness, and its identification with the whole realm of truth of every kind—I remark, first, that if it was ever proper for love to have contempt, it seems to me that it would be justified in visiting it upon those who are indifferent to the truth; who take life easy: who say that there is no truth, or that, if there is, we do not know what it is; who say that everything is uncertain; and who say to their soul, "Eat and drink." That is it. Men have souls, and they do not know what to bring to them. So they bring bread and wine

to the soul, as if it had a mouth to eat such things as these!—not truth, not faith, not self-sacrifice, not heroism for the things that a man is, or believes, or hopes, or ventures.

I have the most profound sympathy for men who are unbelieving—that is, those who are in the process of untying things which have been tied. I do not believe in any greater trial than that in which they are placed by their childhood. Our beliefs are not written in a book. What I believe comes to me in the face of my mother. It comes to me in the scenes that I participated in with my brothers and sisters in my father's household. What I believe stands associated with the way in which Sunday used to seem on the old Litchfield-town hill, with the great over-arching crystal vault above, and a strange stillness broken only by the sounds which the birds made in the air. All those scenes of childhood went to the twisting up of the elements of my belief. And when I come to anything that I am constrained to say is not true, it is not my belief only that I am rooting out: it is my father; it is my mother; it is my brother; it is my sisters; it is my childhood imagination; it is me. I am lacerating a part of my very life. And when men, moved by their fidelity and truth, are passing over the weary desert way of untwining and unblending, they are to be pitied. If there are any men on earth that should be sympathized with and forborne with, it is the doubters, who are doubting that they may believe. It is they who through doubt are calling to God; who through the night are seeking the morning; who through the desert way are steering for the fruitful land. And on the other hand, if there be any class of men who are more void of respect than another, it is those who do not care anything about truth. The seasons come and go, the sun rises and sets, the tides of the sea roll in upon the shore and recede again; and they, not caring for the truth, nor for anything else but their own ease and comfort, go into the world, make bargains, create little bits of whirlpools, and ingurgitate all they can get, whirling in little eddies on the Amazon of life, or reclining on the bank of some brook, where they can fish and eat. And such degradation, gilded over with a sort of public respectability, is oftentimes a substitute for conscience, and honor, and manhood. Men who have no pulse; men who have no heart; men who stand on the clod, and do not know where the clod ends and where they begin; men who live contented with nothing but the clay—they are the respectable men who would burn you because you do not believe in their catechism. Men who would not sit down on the Bible, though they would violate every precept of it; men who believe in the outside of everything, and

in the inside of nothing—are not these the men who are to be pitied, because they are sodden in stupidity? But the men who doubt because they long for the truth; men who lift up in the darkness cries and tears to God for light; men that churches often frown upon; men who do not walk in your processions, and whose children are shut out from your schools; men who, after all, hear the voice of God though they cannot put into articulate sounds what he says or means—such men God loves; he is taking them through the wilderness, and the Jordan will open and let them into the promised land. Have compassion on doubters who are honest and earnest.

But let no man take shelter under this. Let no man account himself as included in this catalogue who takes no pains, and who suffers nothing to solve doubt. Let no man suppose that this applies to him if he works none, sows none, reaps none, lives none. Life is an earnest business. The great fact to you in this universal realm is that you yourself live, and that you are what you are. Before you are all the issues of infinity; and you cannot afford to live in this world and be indifferent as to these issues. The existence beyond the present life is that on which men should put the most emphasis, and to which they should attach the most value.

I find it difficult not to have a feeling of contempt for the cynically skeptical. I want to love everybody; but I find it very hard to love a man who coldly dissects my Christ, that is to me more than my children, more than my wife, more than my innermost self, more than that self in its imaginations, and visions, and hopes of the future—who is to me the Chief among ten thousand, the One altogether lovely. It was enough, to hustle him out of Jerusalem, and put a cross on him and crucify him. Even the Jews did not lay him on the dissecting table while he was yet alive, and with cold hand and ribald language dissect him. And when I see men, who pretend to be teachers of natural religion, take those truths which palpitate with a million sensibilities in a million hearts, and with a hard, skeptical spirit cut them up, there is where I am put to task. I think that sometimes, if I were taken at the right heat I could die for somebody; but I could not die for such men, I am afraid.

I had rather be fanatic in believing than a fanatic in doubting. Doubting and belief are brother and sister. They are to each other what night is to the day, and what day is to the night. The two together make the round day. The winter is as necessary to the joy of summer, as is the summer to the enjoyment of winter. All men do not dare to doubt, and do not dare out of doubt to work

belief. It is only to men who bring no heart and no humanity to the investigation of truth, and who are actuated by a base spirit of contempt for it, that I bring this rebuke. All hail to earnest, honest, sweet-minded men who are seeking the truth every where. All hail to the great army of men who are questioning the secrets of the material globe. All hail to the men who strike fire from many a rock, so that while they learn physical facts spiritual elements may flash out of them. All honor to that great band of men, who, in legislation, or in jurisprudence, or in schools, are finding out the truth of God in the relations of associated humanity. All honor to the great teaching band, from him who sits in the chair of the university giving to the noblest natures the last and best deductions of learning, all the way down to the poor threadbare woman who has exiled herself from her father's house to go among the slaves that were, to teach them out of her humility the love of humanity. Next to fathers and mothers, this great teaching band are God's most precious co-workers. All hail to the heroism of maiden sisters who are seeking to win to Christ children that they did not bear. All hail to the obscure who use that which is sweet in their own nature to sweeten life in humble places. All hail to those who, though they may not know it, are following after Christ, and are witnesses for Christ.

Has not the earth longed enough for better times? Is not God bringing in his kingdom, not by observation, not by orthodoxy, not by enthroned priests, but in a manner corresponding to that in which his Son came into the world, who was born of a peasant, and laid in a manger? Is not God, by universal humanities, by tender fidelities, by all that belongs to religion, by all that belongs to the schools, by all that belongs to patriotism, by all that belongs to the inflamed hearts of scientific men who are earnestly seeking after God in history and in nature—is not God by these things bringing in that kingdom in which dwelleth righteousness?

I believe in the historic Christ. I believe in the theologic Christ. I believe all that the schools do—modified however. That which they believe seems to me but a handful of the truth. I believe more than they believe. The bounds run out to the uttermost. My soul takes hold upon the universal, upon the infinite, and therefore upon the divine itself. And I rejoice that God rules over men in spite of them, restraining the wrath, and causing the remainder thereof to praise him, and that he is bringing forward that great day when all shall be glorified, justified, sanctified and saved.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

Our Father, bring us into the fellowship of those that behold thee, that see thy power, that are taught in the inward man of thy existence and of thy nature; for we are dwelling afar off in a land of clouds and of darkness; and what time we think we behold thee, and are filled with joy, already we see clouds coming upon the horizon that shut thee out again. We have life, with all its cares and duties, with all its light and darkness, with all its fears and temptations, with all its selfishness and pride; and how to carry our souls so that they shall be even; how to conform our life, that is beaten upon by so many storms, to our thought of life and to our wish of life—this tasks us every day. If we were shut up to ease and comfort, and shielded on every side, we might do better, though we should prove weak; but we are not. All thy winds are let down upon us, and all the earth has its way with us, in summer and in winter, in seed-time and in harvest. All troubles come; all solicitations and vehement persuasions come; all fears and strivings come. Multiform are the influences which come in on every side, and our souls are sensitive to everything that speaks to them; and we are drawn hither and thither; and are often cast away from family restraints, and from influences and thoughts of God; and are tried vehemently with poverty, and yet more with the temptations of riches. We are tried in prosperity and in adversity; in living and in deaths; in aspirations and in yearnings, which tend to breed contempt for things that are. We are met by rude overthrows which bring us down to the reality of things, and make us almost ashamed of aspiration. And behold, at times how we wallow! Behold again, how we sing not far from the gate of heaven! Tossed about thus, we are sometimes upon the mount of transfiguration, and sometimes in the valley where demons rage. Now we are strong and confident, and then weaker than water. Dost thou not remember us? Dost thou forget us? Wherefore are we cast about? Wherefore, at times, do we doubt thee and thine—yea, almost being itself—and wonder if we be more than dreams that wander through the air. O thou that knowest the deep things of the spirit, are we not in all these things in thine heart? and are not all these things the touches of life itself, and of God therein, by which, by and by, we shall be brought forth? O Lord, we ask not release, but only thy moulding hand. Yet, when the day is short, and the air is too much for us, shield us. Give us at least this thought, that thou knowest us. Take not from us the thought that thou art. Cast us not into the wretchedness of orphanage. Separate us not from faith in thee. May we never be so far from thee that we cannot feel thy heart. And though thou dost not answer back to us in the words which we utter to thee, though we have not now the hand which thou didst often put in the hands of thy disciples, and upon those whom thou didst heal, grant us that knowledge of thee which comes to the inner man. May we rise into that spiritual sensibility, that sensitiveness of conscience, by which we shall feel thee as a Spirit, though we cannot discern thee by the outward vision. And so may we have our life in thee, and thy life in us. And may we have patience to wait for our birth, and know that there is a better life, and that we are working toward it, and that no development is amiss; that no care is too much; that there is no attrition that has not its mission for us. Grant that we may have this evidence of being on the royal way; that there may come times of peace with the fulfillment of duty; and that we may be hedged in from evil. May we rejoice; and may our rejoicing comfort those who have not our joy. If we have less severe times than others, may we be captains for them as well as victors for ourselves. If thou hast given us the light and power of thought and refinement, may we think for the dull, and may we hold forth our light to those

who are in twilight and darkness. May we behold what is the mystery and majesty of brotherhood among men. And we pray that nothing which brings joy or sorrow to our fellows may be thought unworthy of our sympathy and of our regard. We pray that we may be joined to one another. As drops of blood unite and course through our veins to bring life, so may thy people learn to be united, and to be, as it were, the blood of the world. And we pray, O Lord, that this spirit of unity may be full of knowledge, and full of fidelity, and full of truth, and full of courage, and full of patience. Grant that there may be a manhood in Christ Jesus which shall make the name of Christ glorious before men. But thou must stoop again, and every day, to lift up thy little ones. Thou must continually be our Life. When thou art not present, our courage goes, and we faint by the way. It is thy hand that has unbarred the truth. It is thou that hast made manhood seem so much to us that we never can attain unto it; but we see how with thine influence thou hast hedged us around. Thou knewest that we were too proud, and thou didst tread our pride under foot by the majesty of thy death, and by thy risen glory in the heavenly land. By all these, thou didst overcome evil for us as thou didst for thyself, and as thou hast for all creatures.

We pray that thou wilt lead us more and more in confident faith; more and more in sympathetic relations with thee. Look upon thy servants that are before thee—all of them, and each one of them—in all their relations; and have compassion on them. What are we whose hearts are as stone pleading thee, that art a God of pity, whose pity is in all the heavens, and whose mercies are in all the earth? And yet, thou hast taught us to plead with thee, and encouraged us to urge thee; and we do it reverently, with a humble heart, and with a grateful sense of how thy thoughts of mercy run immensely beyond ours, and how we are as the voice of babes calling to manhood and to Godhood. Have compassion, we pray thee again, upon all that are in thy presence; and encourage those who are dying for lack of courage; and give rebuke to those who are growing too proud; and open the better way to those who are living selfishly and cincturing themselves about with comforts in life; and awaken sympathy in those who are of a hard and stony heart, that they may open the rock again and pour forth streams in the desert.

Grant, we pray thee, that those who are in the midst of the cares and affairs of life may have patience administered to them. Open their horizon, and let them see the relation between the life that they now live, with its trials, and the better life which is to come.

Draw near to all those who are in sorrow. May they be willing to bear pain and suffering long continued, if need be, until it shall have done its work. Grant, we pray thee, that those who are bereaved, and stand thinking not so much of themselves as of others, and reflect upon the great work which, on the sea and on the land, death is doing, may be comforted. How many are there that are heart-broken! But thou, who knowest life and death, thou who knowest all things, and art the Comforter, draw near to the children of sorrow, and manifest thyself to them, that they may not grieve as those who have no hope. We pray that all the ministrations of trouble in our households may be as clouds on which the sunshine paints all the colors of hope and cheer. We pray, O Lord, that thou wilt grant more and more strength to those who need strength.

Grant that those who are strangers among us, and are homesick, may find brotherhood in nearness to thee, and in a faith that shall clasp thy promises. May they find those consolations which can be found nowhere out of the house of God—the home of the soul. Let thy blessings fill their households, and preserve all that they have left behind.

We pray that thou wilt grant thy blessing to rest upon all those who are laboring for the public welfare, even in the most humble spheres. Be with our teachers, and with all those who go forth to read thy word in desolate homes; and those who find their way as messengers of mercy to prison houses and hospitals and the by-ways of life; and those who are using their wealth and enlightenment for the comfort of those who are about them. Inspire these good works, and the spirit out of which they spring. Minister to it yet more abundantly.

Grant thy blessing to rest upon the instrumentalities for good throughout our whole land—upon schools and colleges; upon newspapers and books, and those that make them. And we pray that there may be more and more heroism and patriotism; more and more love of intelligence and truth; more and more of the spirit of charity and of justice; more and more of that spirit which fears God and loves man. We pray that ignorance may be purged out from us, and that the day of intelligence may be more and more bright, until the glowing noonday thereof. And we beseech of thee that thou wilt teach us not to love ourselves alone, nor our own people alone, but all men, for Christ's sake. May nations feel their kinship. May they no more sit over against each other to destroy. May they no more lay snares and dig pits. May the sounds of woe and the reasons of woe cease in all the earth. We beseech of thee that despotisms and oppressions may come to an end; that ignorance, which weakens men, may pass away; and that all men may know thee, whom to know aright is life eternal, as well as joy and happiness here. Let thy kingdom come, and thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

We ask it for Christ's sake. *Amen.*

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

O God of much patience, we cannot understand thee. Thy thunder we understand. We understand the stroke of thine hand. We understand the majesty of thy judgments in long processions. We find in our carnal natures something by which we reduce them to the measure of ourselves; and then we conceive of them. It is thy gentleness, thy patience and long-suffering, that we cannot understand. How thou hast waited for the world! How thou hast borne with the generations of men! If to our dull eye and insensitive nerve the world has been so strange a scene, and so full of affecting things, what must it have been to thine eye and heart! Thou didst not die upon Calvary. Thou hast been the eternal sacrifice. It is in thy heart that the sacrifice goes on; and love-suffering is with thee evermore. Thou art leading, and thou art guarding the race. We worship thee, Supreme Love. All bounty is with thee. All truth, and all patience, and all long-suffering are steering universal affairs toward the consummation of righteousness. Thou art drawing men away from the earth, and the beast toward heaven and the angel. Thou art working and winning, and carrying those who are dear to thee up toward the eternal sphere. Even so, Lord Jesus, live on. Still pursue thy work. Bear the thorns which men still plant upon thy brow. Bring us at last into that royal realm of victory where we shall see the print of thy suffering. And at last we will cast our crowns at thy feet, saying, Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name, be the glory forever and forever. *Amen.*

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